## SOUTH DAKOTA REHABILITATION COUNCIL

# ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010

#### **LETTER FROM THE CHAIR**

December 29, 2010

Governor M. Michael Rounds State Capitol Building 500 East Capitol Avenue Pierre, SD 57501

#### Dear Governor Rounds:

On behalf of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council), I am pleased to provide you with a copy of our annual report. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, specifies that a report be submitted to you and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration on an annual basis.

The following pages reflect the activity of the Board and Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) this past year. This activity has had a tremendous impact on the lives of South Dakotans with disabilities. One outcome is that 690 individuals with disabilities accomplished their employment goals in careers of their choice as a result of services received from the Division. Another outcome is 407 students with disabilities had a paid work experience during their high school transition process.

The Board and Division will continue working cooperatively to provide services to citizens with disabilities seeking employment, and we thank you for your support of our efforts.

Respectfully,

Dan Rounds, Chairperson

Cc: Board Members
Lynnae Ruttledge, RSA Commissioner
Sue Rankin White, RSA Liaison

## South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council Board of Vocational Rehabilitation

#### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The State Rehabilitation Council – is established in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act) and 34 CFR 361.16-361.17 of its implementing regulations.

The State Rehabilitation Council - known in South Dakota as the **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** – gives advice to and works in partnership with the vocational rehabilitation agency in South Dakota - **Division of Rehabilitation Services**.

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation plays a significant role in ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation program operates effectively and remains responsive to the needs of those served. The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation works in partnership with the Division of Rehabilitation Services in developing policies, planning activities, evaluating program effectiveness and carrying out other functions related to the vocational rehabilitation program.

The working relationship between the **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** and the **Division of Rehabilitation Services** is a partnership focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective vocational rehabilitation services.

## BOARD OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION MEMEBERSHIP

The State Rehabilitation Council - Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (Board) - is appointed by the Governor to assist the Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) to develop and evaluate employment services for South Dakotans with disabilities.

The Board's fifteen members are a cross-section of South Dakotans who have a stake in vocational rehabilitation services. They are selected based on personal qualifications and the needs of the Board. Members serve three-year terms.

The Board works jointly with the Division to develop and annually review vocational rehabilitation goals and priorities. In addition, the Board contributes to the study of consumer satisfaction and customer service needs.

Dan Rounds Carol Kirchgesler Aberdeen Pierre Chairperson Robert Kean Elaine Roberts Pierre Sioux Falls Leo Hallan Vice Chairperson Yankton Craig Eschenbaum Aberdeen **Grady Kickul** Member-At-Large Pierre Melissa Flor Matt Cain Pierre Sioux Falls Kathy Hassebrook **Brett Glirbas** Aberdeen Sioux Falls Lyle Cook Joe Rehurek **Eagle Butte** Yankton Cindy Koupal Nicole Darland Pierre Sioux Falls

Staff: Faith Ellis Colette Wagoner

#### **Meetings**

All meetings are announced, open and accessible to the public. The Board may also hold hearings and forums, as they deem necessary. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, in cooperation with Division and Board staff, as stipulated in the bylaws.

#### **ABOUT THE BOARD**

#### **Committees**

There are three standing committees through which the Board conducts a good deal of its work. Committees use conference calls, video conferencing and face-to-face meetings, to conduct business. The work of the committees is reported at each quarterly Board meeting for the full Board's consideration and action. The committees are noted below with their assigned activities.

Executive Committee: This committee may act on behalf of the Board to perform necessary business matters between regular meetings, provided their actions receive concurrence of the full Board. They bring recommendations to the full Board on the following: annual report, state plan, staff support agreement, new member orientation, legislative agenda and meeting agendas.

<u>Consumer Services Committee:</u> Their role includes involvement with the consumer satisfaction survey, review of the Division's goals and strategies, recommendation of systems change priorities, collaborating with the Division's Futures Initiative workgroup, policy review and recommendations, and public meeting topics and process.

<u>Public Awareness Committee:</u> This committee focuses on National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities and Governor's Awards ceremony.

#### <u>Meetings</u>

December 16-17 2009 Ft. Pierre

> March 9-10 2010 Oacoma

> June 22-23 2010 Pierre

September 9-10 2010 Ft. Pierre

#### **BOARD ACTIVITIES**

#### State Plan/Public Meetings/Public Input

The Board and Division have made a commitment to gather, review and analyze information through various means: meeting with consumers and family members, joint conversation with other boards, councils, associations, joint activities with employers, and human resource managers. Board meetings have been scheduled to coincide with other group meetings to learn from one another and identify ways to more closely collaborate with one another.

All obtained information is considered when reviewing and updating the Division's State Plan. This document helps set the course of how to best serve South Dakotans with disabilities with employment goals. The State Plan is a "plan in progress" which needs to be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Board members and Division staff utilize comments to best gauge their progress towards meeting the goals of the agency. Thus, evaluating progress is continuous.

Over a year ago the chairpersons of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council determined it was a priority to meet on a regular basis. The chairpersons act as liaisons to their respective groups. They have discussed possible collaborative efforts e.g., joint committees, hosting joint public meetings. Specific outcomes included disseminating a joint solicitation for nominations, a joint review committee of the Governor's Awards and National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities, and collaboration on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).

The chairpersons also serve as the CSNA Executive Committee, along with Division staff, to oversee the information gathering, make recommendations regarding goals and communicate with the larger boards and stakeholders. The CSNA Executive Committee is attempting to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities in the state in order to guide the development of the future state plans.

#### Partnering with the Office of Special Education

Board members had an overview of the Office of Special Education Program "Improving Educational Results for Students with Disabilities" during the December meeting. Information was reviewed in detail, which focused on high school graduates and what they have done one year out of high school. The survey asked detailed questions about what they are doing, i.e., are they going to post-secondary school (full or part-time), working (full or part-time), or a combination of the two. Other information included: wages per hour, hours worked per week, family insurance and adult service contact. The overview included 16 predictors of post-secondary success. Some vocational rehabilitation programs which contribute to this success included: Project Skills, Youth Leadership Forum and Catch the Wave. These programs provide students with disabilities with paid work experience, exposure to post secondary education, advocacy and leadership training.

#### Joint Meetings of the Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council Chairpersons

The Chairpersons of the three entities have had regular conference calls throughout this reporting period. They planned the joint meeting held in June and structured the agenda to address commonalities, service coordination, employment initiatives and the comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

The three entities also initiated a joint solicitation of nominations for membership. Details were included on the essential duties, values and qualification desired of nominees, as well as time and travel commitments. Solicitations were mailed to over 500 people and organizations across the state. Nominees were submitted to the Governor for review and action and appointments were made to the Board.

#### Partners in Policymaking

The Board and Division identified representatives to attend the Partners in Policymaking listening and graduation sessions hosted by South Dakota Advocacy Services. Facilitated discussion took place on a variety of issues which impact persons living with a disability (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, independent living, transportation, education, housing and Social Security).

#### Partnering with the Department of Labor

Staff from the Department of Labor provided an overview of the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) at the Board's September/October 2009 meeting. The NCRC is a portable, assessment credential used by employers across the United States. The assessment verifies an individuals' core employability skills. Training has been conducted across the state with vocational rehabilitation staff and other providers to provide a basic understanding of the assessment process. A fee schedule was developed and vocational rehabilitation consumers were being referred for this service in January.

#### Governor's Awards Luncheon

The Board and Division hosted the Governor's Awards ceremony and luncheon along with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This event recognized the efforts of individuals, employers, and organizations for their contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities in South Dakota.

#### Disability Services Summit held in Eagle Butte

The Board and Division joined with other entities to host a gathering in Eagle Butte the end of April. Ten different programs were represented (e.g., Statewide Independent Living Council, Oun'iyekiypi Vocational Rehabilitation Services, South Dakota Advocacy Services, Native American Advocacy Program, Talking Book Program). The gathering provided an opportunity for individuals to meet with agency representatives and learn about available services. Information was shared and public comment was gained.

#### **Employment Initiatives**

The Board and Division realize the importance of having linkages to the business community. Division staff and Board members have been identified to work with different projects. Reports are provided at each meeting to keep members informed. Some of the initiatives include: Employer Resource Network, Project SEARCH, Business Resource Network, Nu-Tech and the Freedom to Work Project.

#### **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)**

The Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired provided financial assistance to twelve communities to host NDEAM activities. These one day awareness events provided information and education to the public regarding the strengths and talents that people with disabilities bring to the workforce.

### American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

The Division received additional funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The funds targeted assistance to individuals with the most significant disabilities directly impacted with job loss due to the recession.

This was a time that the Division was seeing an increase in applications by 18%. These funds served 514 individuals and 282 individuals were placed into employment. These funds helped the Division avoid moving into an Order of Selection.

## Areas targeted by both the Board and Division

- Increase the hourly earnings of consumers;
- Increase average hours worked per week;
- Increase the number of individuals with disabilities who are working; and
- Increase contact with youth transitioning from high school

#### **Futures' Initiative**

Another project the Division started several years ago is called "Futures". The Futures' Initiative was designed for vocational rehabilitation staff who are interested in moving into a new, different, or expanded role within the vocational rehabilitation agency. Futures' members are given the opportunity to expand their knowledge, skills and abilities by taking leadership roles in project development and participating in quality training to become exemplary leaders. Staff have provided updates at each meeting, and the Board is fully supportive of the Division's initiative and its vision for succession planning.

#### **Mental Health Initiatives**

The Board's September meeting was planned to coincide with the meeting of the South Dakota Council of Mental Health Center Directors (Council). The Council is made up of eleven mental health center directors and the Council's executive director. Time was utilized to become acquainted and learn about vocational rehabilitation services as well as services provided by the mental health centers. This was also an opportunity to talk about experiences with vocational rehabilitation - what works and what could be done differently.

This coincided with the work the Division initiated with the Division of Mental Health and the Council of Mental Health Center Directors on the development of a Memorandum of Understanding. The purpose of this memorandum is to establish the coordination of services from pre-employment skill building to long-term ongoing supports and how to best meet the supported employment needs of individuals diagnosed with severe mental illness.

#### Coordination of Services with Division of Developmental Disabilities

The Board has been involved with updating policy on joint funding involving the Division of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division of Developmental Disabilities. A memorandum of understanding is being updated to reflect the current description of programs and services available through the agencies, the referral process and how services are coordinated between the two vocational rehabilitation agencies and the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

#### **Project SEARCH**

The Division has been reporting to the Board on the progress of a new program - Project SEARCH - which is a business led internship program for students with disabilities in transition from school to work. It provides students who want to work a chance to explore careers and develop transferable job skills. It is designed as an unpaid internship program and places students in real-world situations where they learn all aspects of gaining and maintaining a job. Placement is based upon the students experiences, strengths and skills. Students receive support with accommodations, adaptations, and onsite job coaching services Two hospitals (Avera McKennan and Avera St. Lukes) are participating in the development of this program.

#### **Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance**

#### Who We Serve

- The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program served 5,637 South Dakotans, compared to 5,139 last fiscal year.
- There were 2,641 new applicants, compared to 2,509 applicants last fiscal year.
- The average age of the applicant was 35.7 years of age.
- 70% of eligible VR participants had two or more serious functional limitations.
- 40% of Vocational Rehabilitation's participants were transition age, up to 24 years of age.
- 30% of Vocational Rehabilitation's participants reported a serious mental illness as their primary disability.
- 27% of VR participants received either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

## Vocational Rehabilitation's Outcomes

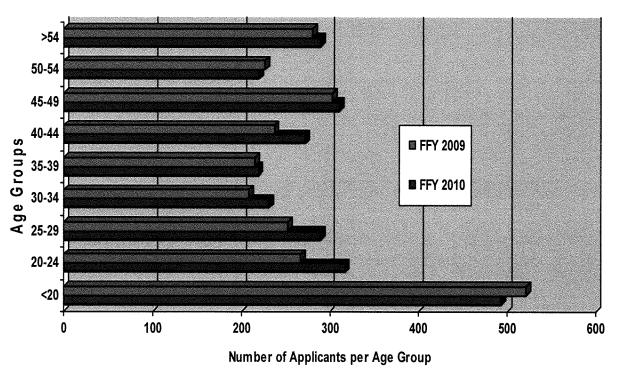
- 690 Vocational Rehabilitation participants obtained employment.
  - 98% of the employment outcomes were at minimum wage or above.
  - Of those obtaining employment, 120 (17%) utilized formal supports with an average wage of \$7.80/hr.
- Upon completion of the VR program, participants working above minimum wage worked an average of 28.78 hours.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program is a comprehensive program designed to assist individuals with significant disabilities in making career decisions and reaching their employment goals.

#### **Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance**

The Division had a total of 2,641 individuals apply for vocational rehabilitation services in fiscal year 2010. The following chart depicts the number of applicants served per age group.

## Number of Applicants Per Age Group (10/01/2009 to 9/30/2010)



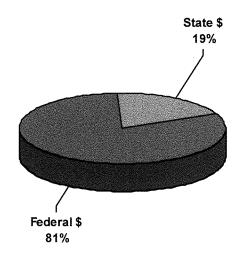
⇒ There were 2,641 new applicants this fiscal year, which is a 5% increase from the previous year.

#### Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance...

At 47.8%, South Dakota ranks as the fourth highest state in the nation concerning the employment rate of people with disabilities who are working. The national average is 36.2%.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Services Serving a Diverse Population Caucasian 83% American Indian 14% African American 3% Asian <1% Pacific/Hawaiian <1%

## Vocational Rehabilitation Funding Sources in 2010



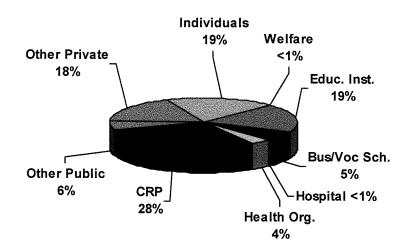
In fiscal year 2010, the average annual income of consumers rehabilitated was \$14,086.00. Prior to rehabilitation, the average income was \$3,205.00.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Participants Receiving SSI/SSDI at Application

SSI	SSDI	SSI & SSDI	Total	Percent of Total VR Caseload
230	377	112	719	27%

The average hourly wage of individuals employed was \$9.49 after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

#### Vocational Rehabilitation Expenditures

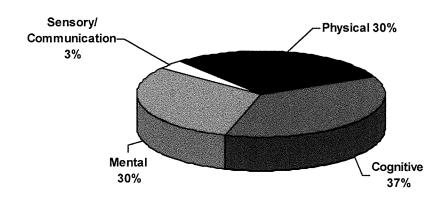


Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance.... After receiving services from VR and at time of closure, there was an increase in consumer's wages and hours worked per week in competitive employment.

#### **Fiscal Year 2010 Performance Outcomes**

Performance Description	At Application	At Closure	Percent of Improvement
Increase in individuals obtaining medical insurance through employment	36	100	278%
Increase in individuals where wages are primary source of support	138	554	401%
Increase of weekly wages	\$61.64	\$271.03	440%

## The primary impairment of eligible individuals seeking vocational rehabilitation services included:



### Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance...

The largest referral source for applicants is the individual themselves (self-referral); the categories include:

Referral Source	Percentage
Self	29%
Post & Secondary Education	15%
Dept of Labor	11%
Community Rehabilitation Programs	8%
Other	7%
Friends/Family	10%
Medical Agencies	4%
Mental Health Center	10%
SSA	2%
Welfare	2%
Corrections/Lawyer	2%

#### **Project Skills**

Many students with significant disabilities do not have an opportunity to gain paid employment experience while in high school. This is an important learning, maturing and socializing experience. Although willing, most employers cannot afford the supports these students frequently require on their first job.

The state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies—Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) fund a program entitled "Project Skills" to address this need.

Project Skills is a cooperative arrangement between VR Agencies and the local school systems. The State VR Agencies fund the wages, worker's compensation and FICA while the schools provide job development, job coaching and follow-along services for the student at the job site. A total of 407 students participated in the program this past year.

In addition to vocational rehabilitation services, consumers receive other types of assistance. The following reflects a broad array of entities that the Division works with to fulfill the consumer's employment goals.

Programs	Number of Consumers Involved
Dept. of Labor	293
Mental Health Center	201
Social Services	215
Supported Employment	120
Community Service Providers	75
Drug/Alcohol Treat- ment	68
Treatment Facility (Residential)	39
Probation/Parole	59
Career Learning	40
Other VR Agencies	11
Honorably Dis- charged Veteran	12
Independent Living Center	13
DOL Programs	8

#### Public Input...

Ways to let the Board and Division know your thoughts.

#### You can call:

Voice/TTY: 605.945.2207Toll Free: 800.210.0143

#### You can fax:

605.945.2242

#### You can write:

Chairperson, Board of Vocational Rehabilitation; 221
 South Central Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota, 57501

You can attend a meeting: All Board meetings are open to the public. Copies of the meeting agendas can be obtained by calling:

- 605.945.2207 (Voice or TTY)
- 800.210.0143

You can become a member:
If you are interested in becoming a member of the State Rehabilitation Council, an application can be obtained by calling:

605.945.2207 (Voice or TTY)